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Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council, in presidential statement, expresses concern at plight of refugees and displaced persons in Rwanda and neighbouring countries; deplores attempts to prevent them from returning home.

+ Secretary-General says international community is morally obliged to ensure that Rwanda tragedy is not repeated in Burundi; stresses that prevention is much less costly than action after the fact.

+ Twelve Somali factions and organizations sign declaration calling for convening of national reconciliation conference on 27 October; Special Representative for Somalia urges leaders to intensify consultations.

+ Secretary-General and General Assembly President congratulate Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat on receipt of Nobel Peace Prize.

+ International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia to hold first public hearing in The Hague on 18 October; to consider application for deferral regarding case under investigation in Germany.

+ Disarmament and International Security Committee to launch substantive debate on Monday with address by Secretary-General.

+ General Assembly to hold International Conference on Families on 18 October.

+ UNHCR resumes humanitarian airlift to Sarajevo; 14 flights reach city today.

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The Security Council today expressed concern at the plight of millions of refugees and displaced persons in Rwanda and other countries in the region. In a statement read out by its President, Sir David Hannay (United Kingdom), the Council deplored the continuing intimidation and violence designed to prevent refugees from returning home. It called on the Governments of Zaire, United Republic of Tanzania and Burundi to do all in their power to ensure the safety of the refugees and of international humanitarian personnel.

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The Council stressed the important role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), saying its presence was crucial to creating conditions of security. It welcomed the Secretary-General's revised deployment schedule for UNAMIR, which would promote security in all sectors of the country and create conditions conducive to the return of refugees.

The Council welcomed the Rwandese Government's commitment to national reconciliation and the promotion of respect for fundamental rights. It endorsed the Secretary-General's call to the Government to maintain an open dialogue with all political groups. The Council affirmed the importance of avoiding reprisals against returnees and safeguarding their property rights. It welcomed the speed with which the Government had responded to allegations that Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) soldiers might have been responsible for systematic killings and underlined the importance of thorough investigations of those allegations.

The Council reaffirmed its view that those responsible for serious breaches of international humanitarian law and acts of genocide must be brought to justice. It stressed that persons involved in such acts could not achieve immunity from prosecution by fleeing the country and could not be considered refugees. The Council said it would act expeditiously regarding recommendations on the establishment of an international tribunal.

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The international community is morally obliged to ensure that the tragic events in Rwanda are not repeated in Burundi, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. He said that while the people of Burundi held the key to the country's political and security problems, they deserved material and moral support. The price of prevention was minimal compared with the exorbitant expenditure needed to deal with a tragedy. He made those comments in a report to the Security Council dated 11 October.

The Secretary-General repeated suggestions he had made to the Council on 19 August: the establishment of a humanitarian base at Bujumbura airport; the maintenance of a military presence in Zaire capable of rapid intervention in Burundi, subject to the approval of the Zairean Government; increasing technical assistance for reconstruction; deploying human rights observers to facilitate national reconciliation; strengthening the office of the Special Representative for Burundi to help prepare the national debate scheduled for early 1995; organizing a regional summit of countries that would be seriously affected by an explosion in Burundi; and more visits by eminent persons from abroad to assure that country's people that they had not been forgotten.

The new coalition Government of Burundi now had to begin the task of national reconstruction and reconciliation, the Secretary-General continued. The country would thus need international support more than ever. He welcomed the decision by donors to coordinate investment efforts and their desire to help Burundi to revive its economy and encourage the return of refugees. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank would organize a round table in Geneva in the first quarter of 1995 to help those efforts.

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The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Victor Gbeho, today urged Somali leaders to intensify consultations with a view to convening a national reconciliation conference by the end of the month. Twelve factions and organizations this morning signed a declaration calling for the conference to be convened on 27 October.

The Special Representative stressed that the United Nations would extend all necessary assistance for the conference, which should include representatives of all the recognized Somali factions.

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Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali and General Assembly President Amara Essy (Côte d'Ivoire) today expressed their delight at the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres of Israel, and Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The Secretary-General commended the three leaders for their courage, dedication and imagination, and for the important results they had achieved. He renewed his commitment to support their efforts to build a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

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The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia will hold its first public hearing in The Hague, Netherlands, on Tuesday, 18 October. A Trial Chamber will consider an application for deferral in the case of Dusan Tadic, which is currently being investigated in Germany. The application, which was presented this week by the Prosecutor, Justice Richard Goldstone, proposes that the German court be formally requested to defer to the competence of the International Tribunal.

In his application, Justice Goldstone said the Tadic case was important to the prosecution of persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law in the Prijedor region of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Criminal acts allegedly committed by Mr. Tadic, prior to and after the Serbian take-over of the area, would clearly illustrate a plan for widespread and systematic destructive persecution of the civilian population of the region, commonly referred to as "ethnic cleansing".

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The First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) will begin its substantive debate on Monday, during which it will discuss nuclear proliferation and disarmament, and efforts to contain the spread of conventional weapons. The Committee is scheduled to hear an address by Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, who will share his views on the situation in the field of disarmament and on further steps to promote international peace and security.

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The Committee's agenda contains 22 items, including a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty; a treaty banning the production of fissile material; the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, and preventing an arms race in outer space. It will also discuss security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States; reduction of military budgets; transparency in armaments; illicit arms transfers; and a moratorium on the export of land mines.

The Committee will consider reports from various components of the United Nations disarmament machinery, such as the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission, and the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters.

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The General Assembly will hold an International Conference on Families at Headquarters on Tuesday, 18 October. High-level officials from various countries will discuss the status of activities in observance of the International Year of the Family -- 1994 -- and set directions for the implementation of a long-term plan of action.

The Conference will be addressed by Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali and General Assembly President Amara Essy (Côte d'Ivoire). The Secretary-General will submit the draft plan of action to the Assembly's fiftieth session next year.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has resumed its humanitarian airlift to Sarajevo, and 14 flights landed there today, according to a spokesman for the Organization. The UNHCR hopes to bring 460 metric tons of food into the city in a large convoy tomorrow, although clearance has not yet been received from the Bosnian Serbs.

The UNHCR suspended its airlift on Wednesday after Sarajevo airport was hit by two mortar rounds, and after two United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) aircraft were hit by small-arms fire.

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